[41 cont.]

764 782 1. The first of these types refers to the custom established among them of sacrificing, during the wake of any member of the community, a number of animals belonging to the dead man (cows, bulls, goats, sheep), the meat of which is divided among those attending the wake along with the corresponding drink, which in these days is rum but in times past was chicha.

[767] The reason given for the sacrificing of animals during a wake in answer to the question is that this is done in deference to the guests and especially to those whom we could call "professional mourners," who spend all day and all night moaning over the corpse. But on observing certain practices and particularly certain taboos regarding the meat of these sacrificed animals, one has to think rather of the ritual character of the sacrifice.

262 764 783 782 It is a fact that the relatives — sons, daughters, nephews [and nieces, sabrinos], brothers [and sisters, hermanos] etc. — of the deceased cannot eat the meat of animals sacrificed during the wake or during the later ceremony of secondary burial, as this, according to their belief, would be equivalent to eating their dead kinsman's flesh. This taboo, imposed on the deceased's relatives, serves to prove to us — so far as it is possible to deduce — the ritual aspect of the sacrifice of the dead man's livestock, stock which on being slaughtered takes on the same untouchable or magical quality, which the individual takes on when he disappears from the world of the living and enters the universe of the dead. [42] To put this more plainly, the animals sacrificed are contaminated by their dead owner.

[765] The untouchable quality of the animal sacrificed at the wake or in the ceremony that accompanies the second burial is supported by the following fact. The belief exists in La [843] Guajira that if during pregnancy the mother or the father of the [1153] future child is present at the exhuming of a corpse, the child is born sickly, suffers from permanent diarrhea and night sweats, 755 765 and gets more and more pale and progressively thinner. Its illness continues to get worse, and none of the familiar remedies have the desired effect. The parents then resort to the following system of curing (a system which with some variations is also common among the people of the town of Santander). They wait until there is an exhumation ceremony, and then

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was wrapped in forty-eight beautifully woven cloaks each worth the equivalent of £20-£25. Despite this the atmosphere was not pleasant and during the feast they sent to Venezuela for so much eau de cologne that it was said to have cost thirty thousand bolivares. What we were attending was thus quite a simple funeral, but it must have cost several hundred pounds.

On the third day the body, wrapped in hides, was placed on a horse and taken out to the burial place, where one of the closest male relatives had dug a grave—a great honour that. Everyone accompanied the body. The men drank copiously as they walked along. The dead man was laid in the grave, and some of the sand that had been dug out of it was carefully shovelled in; then they let down food and drink, including a large jar of spirits, and—to our amazement—the enamel pot followed. Indians who have had a lot to do with white people like to take such pots on their journeys, and apparently it was considered that one might be needed even on a man's last journey.

After this everyone fired their guns into the air, and those who did not have firearms shot arrows. That was done in the hope of driving away any malevolent spirits who might be trying to worm their way back. A large fire was lit on the grave. This would burn every night for some time to come, in order to light the soul on its journey.

Later, the dead man's relatives would go out now and again to lament and take food and drink, which latter they would invite the dead man to share with them. Then, after a couple of years, the man's bones would be dug up and the after-funeral celebrated. We attended several of these; this second ceremony is entrusted to a few female relatives, who, swathed in tunics from head to foot, take hold of the bones with bits of cloth. The skull and skeleton are cleaned and laid on a cloth, in which they are tied up and lowered into a jar and this is taken to the house of grief, where another, though shorter funeral feast is held. After that the jar is buried again.

Those who have dug up the bones and all who have touched a dead person, must not eat with their hands for

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several days afterwards, but have to be fed. They also have to keep to a diet for a while, a precaution that, like the cloaks they are wrapped in while digging up the bones, is to protect them against spirits.

In the old days the house in which a person died was abandoned. Nowadays that is only done if the person has been murdered.

I have come across this after-funeral among several Indian tribes farther south, in particular the Motilon in the Andes, neighbours of the Guajiro, and the Indians of the Llanos plains around the Orinoco. It seems a peculiar custom to us, but it is a sort of memorial ceremony, a feast of remembrance devoted to the dead person, who is thus not forgotten so quickly by the Indians, as is often the case with us.

The animals killed at a man's funeral are to accompany him into the hereafter and enable him to maintain his position there. His immediate relatives must not eat of this meat, which is all given to the guests, who cook it and feast on it.

Different in character is the sacrifice of some creature, a black sheep or a brown cow, which the piache recommends when he has dreamed that someone is in danger of being murdered. Here the animal is being killed in place of the threatened man, the goat or cow acting as substitute so that the human can escape his fate. Presumably, what used to happen was that the person threatened had to go out and kill some wild animal, a deer for example. The custom of slaughtering cattle at a funeral originates from the change in the Indians' way of life that resulted from their making cattle-rearing their main occupation. Earlier the dead person was given other grave-goods to enable him to manage in the life hereafter, including ornaments and that sort of thing. In the pre-Columbian era quantities of polished stone beads and tuma were placed in the graves. Then, when fortunes began to be reckoned in cattle and horses, it was obvious that the dead person must have cattle to accompany him. To the Guajiro, as to the general run of Indians, there is no such thing as natural death. Were it not for the dangerous world of the spirits and evil enchanters people

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A professional mourner

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